

# SISTERS

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By  
**KATHLEEN  
NORRIS**

## CHAPTER XV. —13—

Swept along by a passionate excitement that seemed actually to consume her, Cherry lived through the next three days. Alix noticed her mood, and asked her more than once what caused it. Cherry would press a hot cheek to hers, smile with eyes full of pain, and flutter away. She was well, she was quite all right, only she—she was afraid Martin would summon her soon—and she didn't want to go to him—

Suspecting something gravely amiss, Alix tried to win her confidence regarding Martin. But briefly, quickly, and with a sort of affectionate and apologetic impatience, Cherry refused to discuss him.

"I shall not go back to him!" she said, breathing hard, and with the air of being more absorbed in what she was doing than what she was saying. "But do you mean that you are really going to leave him?" the older sister questioned.

"I don't know what I'm going to do!" Cherry said.

"But, dear—dearest, you're only twenty-four; don't you think you might feel better about it as time goes on?" Alix urged. "Now that the money is all yours, Cherry, and you can have this nice home to come to now and then, isn't it different?"

Cherry was looking at her steadily. "You don't understand, Sis!" she said.

"I understand that you don't love Martin," Alix said, perplexed. "But can't people who don't love each other live together in peace?" she added, with a half smile.

"Not as man and wife!" Cherry stammered.

Alix sat back on her heels, in the ungraceful fashion of her girlhood, and shrugged her shoulders.

"Think of the people who are worrying themselves sick over bills, or sick wives, or children to bring up!" she suggested hopefully. "My Lord, if you have enough money, and food, and are young and well—"

"Yes, but, Alix," Cherry argued eagerly, "I'm not well when I'm unhappy. My heart is like lead all the time; I can't seem to breathe! People—aren't it possible that people are different about that?" she asked timidly.

"I suppose they are!" Alix conceded thoughtfully. "Anyway, look at all the fusses in history," she added carelessly, "of grand passions, and murders, and elopements, and the fate of nations—resting on just the fact that a man and woman hated each other too much, or loved each other too much! There must be something in it all that I don't understand. But what I do understand," she added, after a moment, when Cherry, choked with emotion, was silent, "is that Dad would die of grief if he knew you were unhappy, that your life was all broken up in disappointment and bitterness!"

"But is that my fault?" Cherry exclaimed, with sudden tears.

Alix, after watching her for a troubled minute, went to her and put her arm about her. "Don't cry, Cherry!" she pleaded sorrowfully.

Cherry, regaining self-control, resumed her work silently, with an occasional, sudden sigh. She had opened the subject with reluctance; now she realized that they had again reached a blank wall.

Three days after their talk in the moonlit garden Peter found chance to speak alone to Cherry.

"Are you ready?" he asked.

"Quite!" she said, raising blue eyes to his.

"It's tomorrow, then, Cherry!" he said.

"Tomorrow!" He saw the color ebb from her face as she echoed him. This was already late afternoon; perhaps her thoughts raced ahead to tomorrow afternoon at this time when they two would be leaning on the rail of the little steamer, gazing out over the smooth, boundless blue of the Pacific, and alone in the world.

"Tomorrow you will be mine!" he said.

"That's all I think of," she answered. And now the color came up to a splendid wave of flame, and the face that she turned toward his was radiant with proud surrender.

He told her the number of the dock; they discussed trains.

"We sail at eleven," said Peter, "but I shall be there shortly after ten. I'll have the baggage on board, everything ready; you only have to cross the gangplank. You have your baggage check; give it to me."

They were waiting in the car while Alix marked. Cherry opened her purse and gave him the punched card-board.

"I'll tell Alix that I have a last dentist appointment at half-past ten," she said. "If she goes in with me, we'll go to the very door. But she says she can't come in tomorrow, anyway. I'll write her tonight, and drop the letter on the way to the boat. Tomorrow, then!" was Cherry's only answer. "I'm glad it's so soon."

"Good-by!" said Cherry, leaning over the side of the car to kiss her

sister. Alix received the kiss, smiled, and stretched in the sun.

"Heavenly day to waste in the city!" said Alix.

"I know!" Cherry said nervously. She had been so strangely nervous and distracted in manner all morning that Alix had more than once asked her if there was anything wrong. Now she questioned her again.

"You mustn't mind me!" Cherry said with a laugh. "I'm desperately unhappy," she said, her eyes watering. "I'd do anything in the world to help you, Cerise!" Alix said sympathetically.

"I know you would, Sis! I believe," Cherry said, trembling, "that there's nothing you wouldn't give me!"

"That's easily said," Alix answered carelessly, "for I don't get fond of things, as you do! My dear, I'd go off with Martin to Mexico in a minute, I mean it! I don't care a whoop where I live, if only people are happy."

"How about Buck?" Cherry said, as the dog leaped to his place on the front seat and licked his mistress' ear.

Alix embraced him lovingly.

"Well—if he wanted to go with you!" she conceded unwillingly. "But he wouldn't!" she added quickly. Cherry, going to the train, gave her an April smile, and as she took her seat and the train drew on its way, it seemed to her suddenly that she might indeed meet Peter, but it would only be to tell him that what they had planned was impossible.

But on the deck of the Sausalito steamer, dreaming in the sunshine of the soft, lazy autumn day, her heart turned sick with longing once more. Alix was forgotten, everything was forgotten except Peter. His voice, his tall figure, erect, yet moving with the little limp she knew so well, came to her thoughts. She thought of herself on the new steamer, only an hour from now, safe in his care, Martin for-

gotten, and all the perplexities and disappointments of the old life forgotten, in the flood of new security and joy. Los Angeles—New Orleans—France—it mattered not where they wandered; they might well lose the world, and the world them, from today on.

"So that is to be my life—one of the blamed and ignored women!" Cherry mused, leaning on the rail and watching the plunge of the receding water. "Like the heroines of half the books—only it always seemed so bold and so frightful in books! But to me it just seems the most natural thing in all the world. I love Peter, and he loves me, and the love is big enough to hide us, and that's all there is to it. Anyway, right or wrong, I can't help it," she finished, rejoicing to find herself suddenly serene and confident.

It was twenty minutes past ten, a warm, sweet morning, with great hurrying back and forth at the ferry, women climbing to the open seats of the cable cars, plucking on their violets or roses as they climbed. Cherry sped through it all, beside herself now with excitement and strain, only anxious to have the great hands of the clock drop more speedily from minute to minute, and so round out the terrible hour that joined the old life to the new. She was hurrying blindly toward the dock of the Los Angeles line, absorbed in her one whirling thought, when somebody touched her arm, and a voice, terrifyingly unexpected and yet familiar, addressed her, and a hand was laid on her arm.

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known—how much had she betrayed—

Gasp, trying to smile, she looked up at him, while the ferry place whirled about her and pulses drummed in her ears. She had automatically given him her hand; now he kissed her.

"Hello, Cherry; where you going?" for the third time.

"I came into town to shop," she faltered.

"You what?" She had not really been intelligible, and she felt it, with a pang of fright. He must not suspect—the steamer was there, only a short block away; Peter might pass them; a chance word might be fatal—he must not suspect—

"I'm shopping!" she said distinctly, with dry lips. And she managed to smile.

"Well," Martin said, "surprised to see me?"

"Oh, Martin!" said her fluttered voice. Even in the utter panic of heart and soul she knew that for safety's sake she must find his vanity.

"I'm going to tell you something that will surprise you," he said. "I'm through with the Red Creek people!"

"Martin!" Cherry enunciated almost voicelessly. She looked from a flower vendor to a newsboy, looked at the cars, the people—she must not faint. She must not faint.

"Well—but where are you going?"

"I was going to the dentist a minute, but it's not important." They had turned and were walking across to the ferry. She knew that there was no way in which she might escape him. "What did you say?" she said.

"I asked you when the next boat left for Mill Valley?"

"We can go—find out," Cherry's thoughts were spinning. She must warn Peter somehow. It was twenty minutes of eleven by the ferry clock. Twenty minutes of eleven. In twenty minutes the boat would sail. She thought desperately of the women's waiting room upstairs; she might plead the necessity of telephoning from it. But it had but one door, and Martin would wait at that door.

Suddenly she realized that her only hope of warning Peter was to send a messenger. But if Martin should chance to connect her neighborhood with the boat, when he met her, and her sending of a message to Peter here—

"I think there's a boat at eleven something," she said, collectively. "Suppose you go and find out?"

She glanced toward the entrance of the Sausalito waiting-room, a hundred yards away, and a mad hope leaped in her heart. If he turned his back on her—

"What are you going to do?" he asked, somewhat surprised.

"I ought to telephone Alix!" Her despair lent her wit. If he went to the ticket office, and she into a telephone booth, she might escape him yet! While he dawdled here, minutes were flying, and Peter was watching every car and every passer-by, torn with the same agony that was tearing her. "If you'll go find out the exact time and get tickets," she said, "I'll telephone Alix."

"Tickets?" he echoed, with all Martin's old, maddening slowness. "Haven't you got a return ticket?"

"I have mileage!" she blundered.

"Oh, then I'll use your mileage!" Martin said. "Telephone," he added, nodding toward a row of booths. "Go hurry; we've got piles of time!"

She remembered that he liked a masculine assumption of easiness where all trains, tickets, railroad connections, and transit business of any sort were concerned. He liked to loiter elaborately while other people were running, liked to pull out his big watch and assure her that they had all the time in the world. She tried to call a number, left the booth, paid a staring girl, and rejoined him.

"Busy!" she reported.

"I was just thinking," Martin said, "that we might stay in town and go to the Orpheum; how about it? Do we have to have Peter and Alix?"

Cherry flushed, angered again, in the well-remembered way, under all her fright and stir. Her voice had its old bored note.

"Well, Martin, I've been their guest for two months!"

"I'd just as soon have them!" Martin conceded, indifferently.

But the diverted thought had helped Cherry, irritation had served her, and the reminder of Martin's old, trying stupidities had lessened her fear of him.

"I've got to send a telegram—for Alix," she said.

"What about?" he asked, less curious than ill-bred.

"Goodby to some people who are sailing!" Cherry answered, calmly. "Only don't mention it to Alix, because I promised it would go earlier!" she added.

"I saw the office back here," he told her. They went to it together, and he was within five feet of her while she scribbled her note.

"Martin met me. Nothing wrong. We are returning to Mill Valley, C. L." She glanced at her husband; he was standing in the doorway of the little office, smoking. Quickly she ad-

ressed the envelope. "Don't read that name out loud," she said, softly but very slowly and distinctly, to the girl at the desk. She put a gold piece down on the note. "Keep the change, and for God's sake get that to the Harvard, sailing from Dock 67, before eleven!" she said.

The girl looked up in surprise; but rose immediately to the occasion. Cherry's beauty, her agonized eyes and voice, were enough to awaken her sense of the dramatic. A sharp rap of the clerk's pencil summoned a boy.

"George, there's a dollar in that for you if you deliver it before eleven to the Harvard!" said she. The boy seized it, stuck it in his hat, and fled.

"And now for the boat!" Cherry said, rejoicing Martin, and speaking in almost her natural voice. They went back to the Sausalito ferry entrance again, and this time telephoned Alix in real earnest, and presently found themselves on the upper deck of the boat, bound for the valley.

Until now, and in occasional rushes of terror still, she had been absorbed in the hideous necessity of deceiving, of covering her own traces, of anticipating and closing possible avenues of betrayal. But now Cherry began to breathe more easily, and to feel rising about her, like a tide, the half-forgotten consciousness of her relationship with this man in the bodily-checked suit who was sitting beside her. She had thought to escape the necessity of telling him that she was not willing to return to him; she had been wrapped in dreams so great and so wonderful that the thought of his anger and resentment had been as nothing to her. But she had that to face now.

She had it to face immediately, too. She knew that every hour of postponement would cost her fresh humiliations and difficulties, and as the boat slipped smoothly past the island that roughly marked the halfway point, she gathered all her forces for the trial. The one distinct impression she had from Martin was the appalling one that he did not dream that she had decided to sever their union completely and finally.

"Well, how's the valley? Bore you to death?" he interrupted the flow of his own topic to ask curiously.

"Oh, no, Martin!" she quivered. "I love it there! I always loved it!"

"Alix is a fine girl—she's a nice girl," Martin conceded. "But I can't go Peter! He may be all right, all that lah-dah and Omar Khayyam and Browning stuff may be all right, but I don't get it!" And he yawned contentedly in the sunshine.

After a few seconds he gave Cherry an oblique glance, expecting her resentment. But she was thinking too deeply even to have heard him. Her mind was working as desperately as a caged animal, her thoughts circling frantically, trying windows, walls, and doors in the prison in which she found herself, and for escape.

She blamed herself bitterly now for allowing him, in the surprise and fear she felt, in the shock of their unexpected meeting, to arrange this domestic and apparently reconciled return to the valley house. But it was too late now! Too late for anything but a bald and brave and cruel half-hour that should, at any cost, surrender them.

Quick upon the thought came another: what should she and Peter plan now? For to suppose that their lives were to be guided back into the old hateful channel by this mere chance was preposterous. Within a few days their interrupted trip must be resumed, perhaps tomorrow—perhaps this very night they would manage it successfully. Meanwhile, until she could see Peter alone, there was Martin to deal with, Martin who was leaning forward, valiantly resisting to her long speeches he had made to this superior or that.

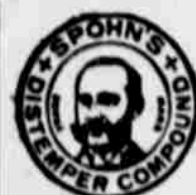
(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Temperature of Ocean Water.

The surface water of the ocean varies in temperature with the latitude. The hottest water—about 80 degrees—is at the equator, and the coldest at the poles. At a depth of several hundred feet, however, the ocean, even in the tropics, becomes extremely cold. This icy water has drifted down from the poles, spreading its chilling effect over the entire sea. In the lowest depths the temperature is very close to the freezing point. But there is no danger that the ocean will ever freeze, because the water is in perpetual motion through waves, tides and also because the warm water at the equator, constantly rising to the top, keeps the general temperature from dropping too low.

Refinishing Nickel Plating.

A new nickel-plating solution said to yield beautiful results is prepared by mixing the liquid obtained by evaporating a solution of one-half ounce nickel in aqua regia to a paste mass and dissolving it in one pound of aqua ammonia, with that obtained by treating the same quantity of nickel with a solution of two ounces cyanide of potassium in one pound of water. More cyanide renders the deposit whiter and more ammonia renders it purer.



## DISTEMPER AMONG HORSES Successfully Treated With Spohn's Distemper Compound

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W. N. U., ST. LOUIS, N. 3-1922.

There would be more wisdom in the world if fathers knew as much as their sons think they do.

## Important to Mothers

Examine carefully every bottle of CASTORIA, that famous old remedy for infants and children, and see that it bears the Signature of *Wm. A. Fletcher* In Use for Over 30 Years. Children Cry for Fletcher's Castoria

## GOOD TIME TO BE NEUTRAL

Domestic Disarmament Conference an Excellent Thing to Avoid, as Matter of Principle.

The noise of what appeared to be a domestic squabble brought the two wayfarers to a halt. From inside the house they could hear a woman's voice pitched in a tone that was almost a scream.

"You drop that chair, you brute!" she demanded in a shrill treble voice, charged with emotion.

"Then you let go that rolling pin!" came back a reply in a more subdued masculine tone.

There was no mistaking the nature of the altercation.

"Let's go stop it," suggested one of the wayfarers.

"Nothing doing," said his companion. "I've got too much sense to get mixed up in one of these domestic disarmament conferences."—Youth's Companion.

## Hickory in Autumn.

Hickories are trees with bright yellow foliage that are decorative in the autumn landscape, says the American Forestry Magazine. One or another of the numerous species is native in all sections of the eastern half of the United States.

## Derivation From the French.

The French for "What shall I say of it?" is *qu'en dira-t-on*, and that has been corrupted into our word *quandary*.

## World's Richest Playwright.

The Rockefeller among playwrights is Franz Molnar, of Budapest, who is reported to have more gold than the Austrian treasury, says the Mentor Magazine. Molnar is best known in the United States for his plays, "Lilium" and "The Devil." The millionaire playwright is said to be extremely eccentric. He lives in an obscure hotel on a Danube island, which he favors because it can be reached by bridge. He mistrusts boats and never uses them.

## For Others, Perhaps.

Brown—Isn't golf exhausting? White—Well, fortunately I'm a little hard of hearing.

## Easy to start from the breakfast table with zest and enthusiasm, but how easy is it to keep on? Does ambition last, or lag, as the day develops?

The afternoon "slump" is a factor to be counted upon, in business or social life.

Usually, there's a reason.

Nerves whipped by tea or coffee won't keep on running, and they won't stand constant whipping.

Many a man or woman who has wished the afternoon would be as bright as the morning has simply been wishing that the nerves wouldn't have to pay the natural penalty for being whipped with the caffeine drug.

Postum gives a breakfast cup of comfort and cheer, without any penalties afterward. There's no "letting down" from Postum—no midday drowsiness to make up for midnight wakefulness; no headaches; no nervous indigestion; no increase of blood pressure.

Think it over. There's full satisfaction in Postum—a cup of comfort for anybody (the children included), any time.

You can get Postum from your grocer or your waiter today, and probably you'll begin to have better tomorrows, as so many thousands have had, who have made the change from coffee to Postum.

Postum comes in two forms: Instant Postum (in tin) made instantly in the cup by the addition of boiling water. Postum Cereal (in packages of larger bulk, for those who prefer to make the drink while the meal is being prepared) made by boiling for 20 minutes. Sold by all grocers.

**Postum for Health**  
"There's a Reason"

**Daddy's Request.**  
Father—I believe you are my boy Tommy's Sunday school teacher. Sunday School Teacher—Yes, little Tommy is in my class and a very bright boy.

Father—I came to tell you that he takes things quite literally and that his mother rather encourages him in his conceptions. I wonder if you would mind easing up a bit on telling him to follow in his father's footsteps.



**Cuticura Soap**  
SHAVES Without Mug

## HAD TO FALL BACK ON LUNCH